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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses innovations in reading and suggests ways in which procedures for them may be humanized. The contents include: "Sex Equality," which discusses studies related to sex images, sex differences in the staffing of schools, sex roles as depicted in reading textbooks, and advances in human relations related to sex equality in the schools; "Career Education," which presents a definition of career education, examples of career awareness in elementary and secondary schools, and a discussion of what relation career exploration has to reading instruction; "Increased Attention to Student Development," which discusses the current emphasis on child development and the issue of teaching reading to preschool and kindergarten children; "Language Difficulties," which discusses the technological revolution and its relation to language difficulties; "Poverty Has Its Effect on Children," which discusses the child from the poverty home and the relationship of an impoverished environment to reading; "Trends in Teaching Children Who Speak Dialects to Read in Standard English," which discusses several recent approaches now being used to meet the dialect problem; and "Trends in Teaching Reading to Non-Speakers of English." (WR)

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READING INNOVATIONS: PRACTICAL
SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING AND
HUMANIZING PROCEDURES

Nila Banton Smith

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I was pleased when I read the theme of this conference:
"Humanizing Reading Instruction." Humanizing Education is a
very popular and important topic and it surely should include
reading.

Suhar (40) says ". . . speaking of humanism is as safe as
favoring motherhood and the flag."

Dubas (11), narrates a brief history of "The Humanizing of
Humans." Among other things he says:

"First, the human species has exhibited for at least 100,000
years certain traits which are uniquely and pleasantly human and
which are more interesting than those that account for its bestial-
ity. Second, the human species has the power to choose among the
conflicting traits which constitute its complex nature, and it has
made the right choices often enough to have kept civilization so
far on a forward and upward course. The unique place of our
species in the order of things is determined, not by its animality,
but by its humanity."

Dubas also gives an example of an act of humanism 9,000 years
ago: He states "Caves in North America that were occupied some
9,000 years ago have yielded numerous sandals of different sizes;
those of children's sizes are lined with rabbit fur, as if to ex-
press a special kind of loving care for the youngest members of
the community."

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Acts of humanism have, of course, increased tremendously in volume and application as the years have passed, but there are still many possibilities for improvement.

It is of grave importance that teachers should be highly sensitive to humanism, and the needs for humanism in our area are becoming more numerous.

There is a new diversity in the personnel of classes. Students represent a wide range in age, their achievement levels deviate tremendously from the usual norms, they come from different racial origins and from different cultures, their home environments vary, and they differ in linguistic backgrounds. Some want to learn. Some don't.

Regardless of these divergencies, you the teacher, must bear in mind always that each individual with whom you work is a human being, that each one merits your respect in keeping with his dignity as a person. Try to find and understand motives for misbehaviors, causes of failures. And be patient with the slow learners. You will probably have more of these in the future. Not only is the slow learner omnipresent, but former dropouts will be returning more often, and potential dropouts will be staying on. Humanism is necessary in dealing with all of these problems.

I will now discuss some innovations in reading and suggest ways in which procedures for them may be humanized.

SEX EQUALITY

The big drive, which is now on to established equality of the sexes was evidently promoted by "Woman's Lib." Like other national movements this one is affecting students and schools.

Even the youngest children have biased sex images. A nursery school teacher said to her group one day, "Do you know that one of the first persons to fly in space was a woman in Russia? Without hesitation a four-year-old male chauvenist retorted "It couldn't happen in this country." He was boasting of masculine superiority in his own country.

In a study (28) on the image of pre-kindergarten girls and boys, it was found that four-year-olds and five-year-olds have stereotyped images of themselves and their parents. In general, girls as well as boys believed that males were smarter, stronger, fixed cars better, drove better, worked better, and were better in general, though females cooked better!

Studies in older grades also reveal that boys are imaged as strong, versatile, and competent and girls as mild, meek, doing a limited number of mild, passive things.

Staffing in schools shows sex differences. Teachers and school administrators fall predominately into two groups--female and male. In 1971 Scholastic Magazine presented statistics showing that 85 percent of elementary teachers were women and 75 percent of principals were men. While the teacher is the leader in her classroom, her superior--the one issuing directives and making decisions is most often a man.

For many years we have been hoping to have more men in the elementary grades. Now they are being urged to teach at this level. At the present we are hearing, once in a while, about a man teacher in a nursery school. It seems that he is the subject of much

criticism from the women teachers (27). Recently a group of three male nursery school teachers in a large city met together for a conference. They complained that they felt lonely, isolated and like outcasts in their respective schools. The primary teachers did not accept them and told them bluntly that men had no place in a nursery school, and that a woman should teach these young children. So bias will probably arise especially about having male teachers at the earlier levels. However, in view of increased divorces and fatherless homes it would probably be very good for these younger children to have a father-substitute at school.

Now, how will these new trends affect reading? For one thing research has shown that many more boys than girls are failures in reading. Some educators think that the boys will identify more closely with men teachers, be happier in working with them, and put forth more effort in learning to read. We have no evidence on this at present but it is a possibility.

Textbooks up to this time have in most cases helped to promote sexism in their content and pictures.

Myra and David Sadker (33) report the study of a committee who analyzed 144 basic reading texts currently used in the schools. They found 881 stories about boys and only 344 in which girls functioned as the main character.

Marjorie U 'Ren (42) analyzed pictures in basic reading texts and found that only 15 percent of text illustrations are of girls and women, and the most important illustrations--those on book covers or chapter headings--are invariably of boys and men.

In the future the present trend toward employing more men teachers will undoubtedly increase greatly in strength and implementation. Publishers of reading textbooks are hastening to revise their publications in the interest of giving equal recognition to girls as well as boys in pictures and content. Teachers will become more keenly aware of equality in the sexes and will strive to promote this concept in their classes.

I think we would be safe in predicting that this movement will endure in the future, and will affect schools and teaching in many ways during the years ahead.

Insofar as humanism is concerned this drive to establish sex equality in the schools carries with it many advances in human relations: improving distorted images of children in regard to masculine superiority, pointing to more equal staffing of administrators and teachers in schools, thus being fairer to women in administrative positions and to men in elementary teaching positions, also giving children chances to have contacts with male teachers in the grades.

All of these situations offer possibilities for humanism which were not available before the drive to develop sex equality in the schools.

CAREER EDUCATION

Career education is receiving a big thrust at the moment (6,26). Until very recently career information was confined to a vocational class in secondary schools. Now we are urged to

include it in all grades from kindergarten through twelve, and even in post-secondary courses for adults.

It is difficult to find a definition of career education. The best one I ran across is one from Wesley Smith (38) who states that:

"Career education is a comprehensive, systematic, and cohesive plan of learning organized in such manner that youth at all grade levels in the public schools will have continuous and abundant opportunity to acquire useful information about the occupational structure of the economy, the alternatives of career choice, the obligations of individual and productive involvement in the total work force, the intelligent determination of personal capabilities and aspirations, the requisites of all occupations, and opportunities to prepare for gainful employment."

Sidney P. Marland, until recently the government's top educational official, tells us that more than 20,000 jobs have been identified. He had a team codify 15 major groupings which they called "clusters." These clusters form the basis for career education in most schools.

In general "career awareness is emphasized in kindergarten through sixth grade. Concepts are introduced to children about work and jobs, the need for work and the many ways in which people earn a living. In kindergarten, for example children might study the work of different helpers in their school--custodian, the woman who cooks and serves school lunches, the school nurse, principal, teachers at different levels, etc., observing what

these people do, talking with them, and listening as each comes to their classroom and tells about his experience and training for his job.

An example of a study of the health cluster in a fifth grade involved an exploration of the systems of the human body--respiratory, circulatory, digestive, muscular, skeletal, nervous, excretory and reproductive.

In grades seven through nine, students narrow down to two or three job clusters, which they explore in depth. In addition to reading and field trips they often do role playing. For one example, they sometimes set up and run a simulated hotel in the classroom.

In high school, students acquire job skills such as typing, auto mechanics, electronics, drafting, etc. The idea is to get all students to pursue training leading directly to a job after high school or to further training at a technical or business school or to a two- or four-year college.

What does all of this have to do with reading? It means that we as teachers must prepare children to read for deeper meanings in informative material and to make very good use of the study skills, for to be successful in most jobs it is especially necessary that job holders be able to keep alert to the many changes in their particular job fields. To children in school the advantages of reading in career education is that it is relevant and functional and these two attributes are basic in attaining reading achievement.

As for the future of career education--will it last or is it just a fad? Some people object to this concept. A few teachers say they have more than they can do in teaching the subjects without adding something additional. Preponents say that in career education all of the subjects can be taught because this concept is so broad. Others say the programs are basically anti-intellectual, merely trying to get people into jobs and conditioning them to a life in the marketplace. Preponents say it is definitely intellectual in that each cluster leads into much study of current life.

Objectors constitute an exceedingly small number in comparison with the very large numbers of enthusiastic proponents, not only among teachers and educators holding high rank positions but apparently also among parents.

Congressman Roman Pucinski says:

"My son is in the ninth grade. This year he is taking French. I have no quarrel with French, for I want my son to be bilingual. But I would feel a great deal better living in an industrial empire which will have a \$2 trillion economy in the 1980's if instead of French my son were taking career education. I am not being anti-intellectual. If my son wants French, let him to to Berlitz. For career education, he needs the public schools."

Of course it might be added that the son could have career education and still take French.

In regard to the future of career education; with parents supporting the concept, heavy funding from the government, some

states requiring it in all schools, large numbers of teachers choosing to teach it of their own accord, it does have promise of staying with us for quite awhile.

What could be closer to the humanistic goal of education than to have children read, prepare for, and choose their life work, and to discuss the life work of others? The recent trend to deal with this topic from kindergarten through high school greatly broadens opportunities to provide humanistic experiences in this area.

INCREASED ATTENTION TO STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

Specialists tell us that the early years are the most important ones in developing a child's health and intellect. Never before has so much attention been directed to child development. This is one of the strongest trends at the present time. It is this trend that probably is largely responsible for the on-going controversy about teaching young children to read.

We all know of some young child who picked up the reading skill pretty much by himself or herself before coming to school. Perhaps you read the amusing account of one such child in the Pulitzer prize winning novel *TO KILL A MOCKING BIRD*, in which the author amusingly portrays the experiences of a pre-school reader. If so, you will remember that Jem said of his four-and-a-half-year-old sister, ". . . Scout there's been readin' since she was born, and she ain't even been to school yet." Then upon entrance in first grade, Scout, whose real name was Jean Louise, was asked to read something that Miss Caroline wrote on the chalkboard and she read it so well that Miss Caroline was visibly vexed. Miss

Caroline then had her read most of the first reader and other readers and finally she asked her to read the stock market quotations in the Mobile Register. Jean Louise read beautifully in all of these situations. All of this time Miss Caroline's irritation was building up and she finally exploded. "Tell your father to stop teaching you. It will interfere with your learning to read in school." Jean Louise said that her father didn't teach her, and then she began soliloquizing to herself on how she did learn to read and she finally decided that it just came like learning to fasten the flap on the back of her union suit without looking around.

First grade teachers today who receive such a child would be amazed but not irritated. A child who had reached a level of reading proficiency such as Jean Louise possessed would pose a problem when placed in a class of beginning readers. It is hoped, however, that the teacher would make adjustments by providing such a child with reading materials appropriate for his or her level, rather than transferring this child to a higher grade where the more advanced age of the other children might have bad effects on social development.

Due to the trend to place more emphasis on growth in early childhood pressure is felt at present in regard to teaching reading to pre-school children and to kindergarten children. This is a controversial issue. Proponents state that children will have an academic advantage if they learn to read before first grade and quote research showing that young children can be taught to read.

Specialists in early childhood education point to research showing that the majority of children are not ready to read during pre-school years, and that while some can be taught to read they are no better off in the long run than as if their reading instruction had been delayed.

Probably the answer is neither "Yes" or "No." Some children with high mental and physical maturation, living in favored home environments may want to read and ask for help during pre-first grade years. If so, these children should not be deprived of the assistance they seek. On the other hand there are other children who do not reach maturity for reading instruction until seven years of age or later. We cannot state any particular chronological or mental age at which all children should be taught to read. This is a matter of individual qualifications.

One emerging trend is to consider these qualifications when making a decision concerning the reading of young children.

Surely this is a desirable trend insofar as humanistic treatment of the child is concerned. Letting the child's interest, desire and ability constitute the deciding factors is far more humanistic than having an adult make the decision in terms of his or her personal philosophy.

LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

Now to discuss language difficulties and reading.

Life in the United States changed when the new independent nation was established, it changed again when the immense Western frontier was being settled, it changed again when its great Agrarian

society became urbanized and industrialized. The most startling change that has come, however, came as a result of the present technological revolution. This drastic and sweeping change made helpless many who had not the skill to run the new machinery, the managerial ability to produce and market goods, the education to hold the rapidly increasing jobs that require high school or college education.

This change struck its first devastating blows with the great black population of the deep South, later it had similar effects with the whites in the quiet hills of Appalachia, the Puerto Ricans on their beautiful green island, Mexican-Americans in the great expansiveness of the Southwest, and the Indians on their secluded reservations. Some, a few, have stayed on in their native locale; thousands, in fact millions, have moved on to towns and cities in the hope of finding work and living a better life, only to discover in too many cases that this hope was just a shining chimera which vanished as days passed by in the new location.

POVERTY HAS ITS EFFECT ON CHILDREN

The situation for these people is improving, some still do not have jobs. As teachers we have children with us whose parents may have jobs now but whose children bear the scars of suffering from poverty in their earlier years; and we also still have those suffering from living in poverty or on a very low economic level. There are even more Caucasians living in poverty than all of the other racial groups. By and large children from all these poverty or near poverty homes have difficulty with reading.

Poverty has always been with us. It has been accepted as a part of the social structure and nothing was done about it. Recently, however, the whole world has become concerned about poverty and most nations are striving to improve this situation.

As one reflection of this rising interest in poverty in general, together with research revealing a high percentage of failure in the reading of poverty children, concern has developed in regard to giving special attention to improving reading instruction with these children.

Most teachers are striving to do this by working harder in trying to teach them to read. This is desirable but there are some basic needs of children which underlie their difficulties in learning to read. These should have as much attention as working with the reading process itself. These factors are low self-concepts, impoverished environment and poor health.

Studies and experience have shown that most disadvantaged children have low-concepts of themselves.

Studies (24,25) have also revealed a significant relationship between positive self-concept and success in reading. Children with good self-concepts are also good readers.

In the light of all the evidence at hand it surely appears highly desirable for teachers of reading to encourage children to improve their self-concept.

The child from the poverty home often comes to school in the first place set not to learn and he thinks he can't learn. His first learning task is associated with reading. He doesn't do well. His self-concept in reading is lowered at the beginning.

Not only should the teacher show confidence in such children by their own attitudes but they should do specific things such as praising the child for very small achievements in reading, giving him or her opportunities to excel in other activities such as drawing, dramatics, playing certain games, assigning simple tasks that he can perform, consulting with parents about the importance of a good self-concept and things that they can do in developing it in their child.

Now on to impoverished environment, which also has a relationship to reading achievement.

Studies (10,28) of the homes of disadvantaged children have revealed that they have fewer books and toys, have minimum of conversation with parents, and there is so much noise they tend to "tune-out" what they hear.

The effect of this environment is pointed out in Moore's longitudinal study (29) in which he found that lack of books, toys, experience and language stimulation in 2-1/2 year-old children were significantly correlated with reading at 7 years.

The health needs of such children deserve special consideration, for their defects in this area are highly prevalent.

Havinghurst (20) found 3957 defects in 2960 disadvantaged children entering kindergarten or first grade. This indicates that some of these children have two or three defects at the same time.

Bradshaw (5) conducted a study of indigent families living

in one location in Florida. He found that infants as well as older children had many illnesses. The parents, also experienced a wider range of diseases and illnesses such as asthma, arthritis, tuberculosis, cancer, strokes and what they called "high blood," and "very close veins."

Morris (30) compared health defects of 400 poor readers in a clinic with 400 normal readers in schools. He found that the poor readers had many times more health defects than good readers.

The trend at present is for teachers to send children who have an obvious sickness to the school nurse. There is need for teachers to probe more deeply than this. They should be continuously on the alert for symptoms of physical defects and diseases and to get individuals who show even slight evidence of such symptoms into the hands of competent medical help as speedily as possible.

TRENDS IN TEACHING CHILDREN WHO SPEAK DIALECTS TO READ IN STANDARD ENGLISH

Usually it is those of the lower, uneducated social class that speak dialects which differ widely from standard English. Many of them are found among the poverty people and need all of the background helps suggested for them, and in addition special assistance in transferring from their native dialectal language to standard English in speaking and reading.

The lower economic class of Blacks and of Appalachians constitute the major groups of dialect speakers in our country. There are, however, quite a number of Mexican-American and Puerto Rican children who speak the dialect of parents who have learned

to use English but with dialects influenced by their native Spanish language.

How do dialects affect reading in standard English. For one thing children who speak a dialect use a language system which is different from that used by speakers of English. If they are plunged immediately into reading standard English they face a double learning task--that of learning to read and at the same time learning a different language.

In the past teachers considered a dialect to be incorrect language and corrected what they considered to be errors in speech. Many teachers still have this concept. If children have a teacher who does not accept their dialect and continually corrects them, they are apt to develop feelings of inferiority and experience a lowering of self-concept which is another hazard in learning to read.

Many children who have encountered this situation while, at the same time, trying to read in standard English make little reading achievement in first grade. Never-the-less, due to grading and promotion policies in numerous school systems they are passed on through the elementary grades ever continuing to be poor readers, until perhaps they drop out at junior high or are assigned to a specialist for remedial reading. Their school life often consists of a series of frustrations, failures, and unhappy experiences. The dialect problem is by no means confined to reading in first grade. It extends throughout the school-years in reading and English and since these subjects are so basic, it affects the other subject areas as well.

In attempts to meet the dialect problem several recent approaches are now in use.

One group of educators advocates immersion in the English language during preschool years and a readiness period in first grade, then beginning to read at once in standard English.

On the other hand, many important linguists in the field, differ in some details of procedure, but are agreed on the basic procedure of: (1) accepting the children's dialect, (2) giving them opportunities to read in their own dialect, (3) transferring their reading ability to standard English as time and expediency permits.

Stewart (39) tells of an experience which he had that convinced him of the desirability of this procedure.

He was working at home with a translation in standard English of a poem, the original of which he had written in Negro dialect. (The translation was in his typewriter, the original beside it on the desk). Two inner-city children dropped in for a visit. While Dr. Stewart went to the refrigerator for refreshments, Lenora (12 years old and a serious problem reader in school) went over to play with the typewriter and found the draft of the non-standard version of the poem and began to read it. Even though she was an extremely poor reader in school she read this dialect version of the poem in a steady voice, her word reading was accurate, her sentence intonation was natural. She read very well. This unexpected success surprised her and she began to discuss it with her little brother. They decided there was something

different about the text but couldn't tell what it was. To compare, Stewart then asked Lenora to read the standard English version of the poem. When she did, all the "problem reader" behaviors returned.

In the future I suspect that forms of procedure will be used generally in which we help dialect speakers to be proud of their natural heritage and at the same time will induct them into the culture of mainstream Americans, the majority of whom speak standard English. We haven't done a very good job of implementing this double goal as yet but we are improving and that is a good trend.

Some excellent studies (9, 22, 23, 37) have been made concerning the language system of Negroes who speak dialects by Dillard; Labov; Shuy, Wolfram and Riley, and others. Stewart has given us a good discussion on "Language Learning and Teaching in Appalachia." Teachers of dialect speakers should read references of this type and keep themselves informed concerning developments. Much more research is needed to ascertain which approaches are most successful.

TENDS IN TEACHING READING TO NON-SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH

There are large populations of Spanish-speaking Puerto Ricans in New York City, and other cities of the East. Concentrated in the Southwestern states are extensive populations of Mexican-Americans who speak in their native Spanish language. The migration of Cubans to Florida adds to our Spanish-speaking population.

Pockets of foreign-speaking children are found among Scandinavians in the Northern Middle states and French in New England. Increasingly emigrants from other countries--especially Germany, Holland and Portugal are coming to the United States and settling in various places.

In addition to children from all these foreign-speaking sources we have our Indians settled on reservations in various places, who "spill over" into nearby states, also our Eskimos in Alaska, and some multi-racial groups in Hawaii, all of whom speak a language totally different from English.

The many speakers of other languages in our country constitute a serious educational problem and one that is much more widespread than many people suspect.

Speakers of other languages like speakers of dialects are hampered in learning to read in English and having to acquire a second language at the same time, except that the dialect speakers already have a basic English language to start with, while the non-speakers of English have to learn a totally new language as well as learning to read in English. This is a double accomplishment for a child to undertake and should be handled with skill.

Unfortunately in some cases these children still are simply placed in classes with the other children where nothing special is done for them. According to recent trends, however, English is definitely taught to these children. Many different approaches are used. Insofar as reading is concerned one approach is to teach English in Nursery school and kindergarten, and as long as is

necessary in the grades before reading instruction. Another approach is to have children read in their own language preceding or along with reading in English. This plan is often hampered because the reading teacher isn't acquainted with the children's language.

In the future it is suggested that primary teachers not familiar with the language of non-speakers of English in their particular communities, take a college or in-service course in that language.

The procedures for teaching non-speakers of English to speak and read in English is improving rapidly. No doubt they will continue to improve in the immediate years ahead.

Perhaps no innovation is more symbolic of increased attention to humanism than the recent concern of reading teachers for children from poverty homes, and from homes in which a dialect or a foreign language is spoken. These children certainly need humanistic treatment, and the present special provisions for teaching reading to them, are certainly a big advance in humanism over the past.

In concluding this brief discussion of present and future trends in reading and humanism, I would like to say that the present is obvious and it points toward the future, but specifics of the future are unpredictable. The best that we as reading teachers can do is to keep ourselves in a continuous state of adjustability to change.

In this connection I like to think of a quotation from Don Fabun. He says:

"Out of the dreaming past, with its legends of steaming seas
and gleaming glaciers,
mountains that moved and suns that glared, emerges this
creature, man--the
latest phase in a continuing process that stretches back to the
beginning of life. His is
the heritage of all that has lived; he still carries the
vestiges of snout and fangs and
claws of species long since vanished; he is the ancestor of all
that is yet to come.
Do not regard him lightly--he is you."

Because he is you, I'm sure you will meet "all that is yet
to come" with promptness and efficiency. I wish you success.

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